

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP LAND USE BOARD
MINUTES
DECEMBER 8, 2021
7:30 PM
202 SIDNEY ROAD, PITTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY 08867
This meeting will be held remotely on Zoom
Zoom Meeting Information is below

Roger Soltys called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting Statement

Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act in that a Notice was published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Express Times and the notice of this meeting was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building.

Roger Soltys led the member present in the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Roger Soltys	present	Mike Chabra	absent	Jennifer Fisher	present
Ken Weiss	present	Dave Dallas	present	John Thonet	present
Philip Koury	present	Alan Dilley	absent	Lou Morriera	absent
Stepen Willis	absent	Eric Blew	absent		

Old Business

Approval of November 16, 2021 minutes

Phil Koury made a motion to approve the November 16, 2021 minutes

Ken Weiss seconded the motion

All members present voted in favor saying aye, Dave Dallas abstained

Approval of Bills

Dave Dallas made a motion to approve the December 8, 2021 bills list

Ken Weiss seconded the motion

Roger Soltys	approved	Mike Chabra	absent	Jennifer Fisher	approved
Ken Weiss	approved	Dave Dallas	approved	John Thonet	approved
Philip Koury	approved	Alan Dilley	absent	Lou Morriera	absent
Stepen Willis	absent	Eric Blew	absent		

New Business

1. **2ND Hearing:** James Kontopodias, 121 Upper Kingtown Road, Pittstown, NJ, Block 24 Lot 23.01. Applicant is seeking a bulk variance from the Land Use Board to construct a one story, 3000 sq. ft. garage which exceeds the maximum allowable building size of an accessory building.

John Thonet made a motion to deny the application without prejudice. Ken Weiss seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor by saying aye. None opposed

2. **Memorialization of Resolution:** Franklin Township Land Use Board Adoption of Amendment to 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report, Dated November 3, 2021

John Thonet made a motion to approve the memorialization of the resolution. Jennifer Fisher seconded the motion.

Roger Soltys	approved	Mike Chabra	absent	Jennifer Fisher	approved
Ken Weiss	approved	Dave Dallas	approved	John Thonet	approved
Philip Koury	approved	Alan Dilley	absent	Lou Morriera	absent
Stepen Willis	absent	Eric Blew	absent		

3. **Informal Conceptual Review:** St. Catherine of Sienna Church, 2 Whitebridge Road, Block 26 Lot 17.02. Applicant would like to discuss with the board the idea of building an Accessory Structure for Religious Education Services.

Paul Juliano from Juliano Architects was present to represent St. Catherine Sienna Parish. He prepared a presentation that would hit on the points that would be discussed in an actual hearing. He has been working with St. Catherine since 2015 and he is the architect that presented to this board in 2016.

Basically the church wants some feedback from the board on what they are looking to do.

St. Catherine is looking to put a parish center building on the site of the existing church.

The goals of the project: the church has a need for space for religious education. They don't have adequate space and would like to expand on their own property rather than developing on an adjacent property. Right now the site is utilized well when there is a large service but largely the parking lot goes unused. They would like to build the parish center on this site and utilize the existing parking lot and storm-water management and not have to disrupt other green space within the township. These are the primary reasons for the variance requests that he will be discussing today. Having less impact on the township and making better use of the land that they are already using.

Mr. Juliano shared the site plan he prepared dated November 23, 2021. It shows the churches 6 acre lot in the RR zone. The existing site is on the intersection of Whitebridge Road and

Pittstown Road. There is the previously developed church, the 112 car parking lot, 2 driveway accesses, a 2 bay garage and some underground utilities, and a detention basin. The site plan displays the proposed parish center. All of the improvements were part of the 2016 application. The only thing that came after that was the two car garage which received zoning approval and was constructed in 2019. The buildable area is depicted on the site plan. The site requires a 100' setback. Every buildable part of this property is already developed.

The proposed project would add the parish center, very limited additional impervious coverage other than the building and walkways. They will be expanding the basin and the septic field. The proposed location is the only available area that is left on the property. They are requesting the side yard setback variance because they feel it has no negative impact because the church owns the adjacent property which consists of the church rectory. The church also owns a vacant adjacent lot. They are all separate lots. The church has no need to increase parking for this use. Mr. Juliano did the calculations and the parking calculating repeats what was in the resolution from 2016. The upper floor of the church has 309 seats and has never reached capacity. It is required to have 103 spaces and there are 112 spaces there today. The second non-simultaneous parking use would be the lower level of the church and the new building which would be used for classrooms. The church lower floor has a requirement for 29 spaces and the new center would require 20 coming to a total of 49 spaces. So the project really doesn't have an impact on parking. The church will be reducing by 2 spaces due to the need to create 2 handicap parking spaces.

This is a conditional use that is specifically listed in the ordinance as accessory structure for religious education services. The use is integral to the church and is inherently beneficial to the town.

The first bulk variance is the side yard setback, the requirement is 100' setback, the church will be requesting a 47' side yard setback. The reason for this request is so that they can take advantage of the existing parking lot.

There are also a few small variances that were requested, they were existing conditions before 2016. They were not exasperated by the expansion of the church in 2016 so they will just need to be reconfirmed with this project. The first is, parking is not allowed within a setback. The existing parking lot is within the rear yard setback line. This existed in 2016 and it was allowed to continue.

There are requirements that the right of way has to be 60' and the cart way has to be 23' or more. So there is a section of Whitebridge Road past the entry into the site and the narrower part of Pittstown road that are under the 60' right of way and the 20' right of way. These were existing prior to 2016 and they are not doing anything to exasperate the situation.

Similarly, the existing driveway is closer than 100 feet to the property line and closer than 500 feet to the intersection. They are not proposing to change this at all but technically these are variances

In 2016 the parish had similar variances; conditional use for the house of worship and a setback variance for the front yard setback.

Mr. Juliano then showed the board a floor plan titled A-1 prepared November 23, 2021. It is a single story building with a footprint of 3940 square feet. This building is smaller than the two adjacent buildings. The rectory is 4600 square feet and multiple stories, the church is 5600 square feet in footprint and multiple stories. So the building being proposed is smaller in footprint and single story. The grade is fairly level. The maximum facade height on the church is 46' and the new building will be at about 25' lower. When they get to the next steps they will make sure that they compliment what they did with the church. The floor plan of the proposed building consists of a secured lobby, office, bathrooms, storage rooms and 5 classrooms. This is only for religious education purposes for 1-8th grade. Average of 15 students per class with one teacher. Classes will occur on weeknights and there are approximately 150 students in the program. Right now the classes are being held in the lower level of the church but it can only accommodate 3 groups. The building would also be used for vacation bible school and parish meetings. The office is not a full time office, it will only be for supervision when kids are in the building. The building has not been designed yet however this is just a basic overview.

Roger Soltys mentioned that the lot is fairly undersized for everything on the lot and now the church is proposing another building. He asked how many acres the rectory is on. Mr. Juliano stated that it is about 3.5 acres and the other lot is a bit over 4 acres. Roger Soltys asked if the church thought about adjusting the lot lines to help mitigate being outside the buildable area. Mr. Juliano stated that that is not the preferred route at this time. In all honestly Roger Soltys said there is no guarantee the rectory will always be there. Moving the lot lines may be considered.

Phil Koury and John Thonet asked why not merge the lots. Then it is all together in one lot. Mr. Juliano said that if they were to merge the lots then they would just be asking for a different type of variance.

Ken Weiss said that he knows that this is a facility that is used by 100's of residents and although there are so things that are exemptions however in the past when we looked at things involving neighbors they don't have the benefit of benefitting 100's of residents so he is in favor of it.

Roger Soltys said he isn't against it and is actually in favor of it however if the church decides to sell the rectory lot then it is a bit of a different situation with the parish center so close to the lot line. Most of the time when the board approves something next to a property line there is normally woods or something next to it.

Roger Soltys said his suggestion is to just possibly do something to mitigate it slightly.

John Thonet agreed he is not against it either however he feels merging the lots may be a more logical consideration.

Dave Dallas said that he understands them not wanting to give up being able to sell the rectory as a single family dwelling. What if you take the lot line and move it a bit closer to the rectory driveway. Not the whole lot line, just come down off of whitebridge road until you get past the proposed building and before you get to the rectory and then go back to the existing lot line so you are taking out a rectangle. And then you can make it up out of the third lot. Then the size doesn't change. John Thonet and Roger Soltys agreed this was a good idea.

Paul Juliano stated in terms of impervious coverage the site is very underdeveloped. The zone max is 40%. This lot with the proposed building is only at 26%.

Phil Koury asked what would be the easier variance to get? The side yard setback or the additional structure variance. He feels the plan is very well thought out.

Dave Dallas asked what the church was expecting to get out of this meeting and Mr. Juliano stated that exactly what was discussed is helpful. It is a tricky situation and they will discuss the options.

Dan Dawson, a representative of the church was also present in the meeting. He said he appreciated the comments and would discuss with the diocese these items that have been discussed.

Dave Dallas made a motion to adjourn. John Thonet seconded it. All in favor

Meeting adjourned at 8:27pm

No new business after 10:00PM unless agreed to by the Board. Any remaining items will be placed on the agenda for the next available meeting. Information pertaining to any item on the agenda is available for public review at the Municipal Building during normal business hours.

Topic: Franklin Township Land Use Board Meeting

Time: Dec 8, 2021 07:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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Prepared by Catherine Innella, Land Use Board Clerk

Catherine Innella

Date approved 2-9-22